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ABSTRACT

A sociolinguistic study of pupil interpretations of the functions of teacher praise in lessons involved 165 pupils in six classes in a single multiethnic, lower socioeconomic status, elementary school. Procedures involved videotaping six language arts lessons in each classroom. After playbacks of videotapes, pupils were asked individually, "What did you hear anyone saying in that part of the lesson?" and were presented with a set of teacher praise statements made in the lesson. Pupils perceived teacher praise as occurring primarily because pupils had good ideas. There were significant relationships among pupil perceptions of teacher praise, pupil participation in class discussions, and pupil "success" in school. There were no significant ethnic differences in pupil perceptions of the functions of teacher praise, or in pupil participation in class discussions, and minimal ethnic differences in pupil success in school. As praise increased in intensity, it decreased in frequency of teacher use, but was reported by pupils in increasing proportions. (Authors)

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Pupil Perceptions of Teacher Praise

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Teacher praise as a concept or phenonmenon burst upon our collective consciousness in the early 1960's with the development and dissemination of the Flanders Interaction Analysis system (Flanders, 1970), reshaping our observations of classrooms, and influencing research on teaching in ways that are still being felt today. A variety of studies of teacher praise followed, and in summarizing these almost ten years ago Barak Rosenshine (1971) wrote:

> Although there is a trend in favour of a positive relationship between teacher approval and pupil achievement, the directions of the correlations are inconsistent from one study to the next. The question of whether there are non-linear relationships between praise and student achievement remains open.

Rosenshine's comments were supported several years later by Dunkin and Biddle (1974). In addition to noting the continuing inconsistency among studies, these authors also stressed the importance of improving methods of data collection and data analysis. They recommended, as had Rosenshine earlier, the refinement of definitions of teacher praise, and suggested that much might be gained by examining teacher praise in context, rather than as a general behavior.

Even as Dunkin and Biddle were writing, many of the studies of teacher effectiveness that incorporated teacher praise as a variable were already carrying out these suggestions (Stallings & Kaskowitz, 1974; Brophy & Evertson, 1974), and we have now accumulated a fair amount of evidence that the effects of teacher praise are context-imbedded. For example, we have learned that praise is differentially effective with low and high SES children (Brophy & Evertson, 1974) and with children of higher and lower entering ability (Stallings & Kascowitz, 1974). There are still some inconsistencies in results, however. Soar and Soar (1979) in a series of four studies, found no significant relationship between positive affect and pupil gain.

While we have advanced considerably in the last ten years in our understanding of the effects of teacher praise, we still know very little about the ways in which pupils interpret teacher praise. This paper reports on a year-long sociolinguistic study of pupils' and teachers' perceptions of classroom discourse, and focuses on one aspect of the study, which has to do with pupil interpretations of the functions of teacher praise in lessons, and pupil patterns of reporting the instances of teacher praise that occurred.

The Problem Under Investigation

The study is one of eight sociolinguistic studies funded by the National Institute of Education, to examine the general problem of causes and effects of inadequate learning of the rules and processes of classroom discourse. The general paradigm that has been used to guide this study is presented in Figure 1. In this model the child's perceptions of discourse at home and at school and his/her participation in classroom discourse are seen as intervening variables between family language factors, or classroom language factors, and eventual success in school. The lines indicate the types of relationships we are examining in the total study. The double lines indicate the relationships to be discussed in this paper.

Each of the boxes in this model represents a set of variables. In this paper only the variables associated with patterns of teacher praise will be considered. Figure 2 identifies these variables in more detail. Most of these variables are self-explanatory, or will be explicated in the process of reporting on data collection procedures

Figure 1

A General Paradigm for Analysis of Participant Perspectives of Classroom Discourse

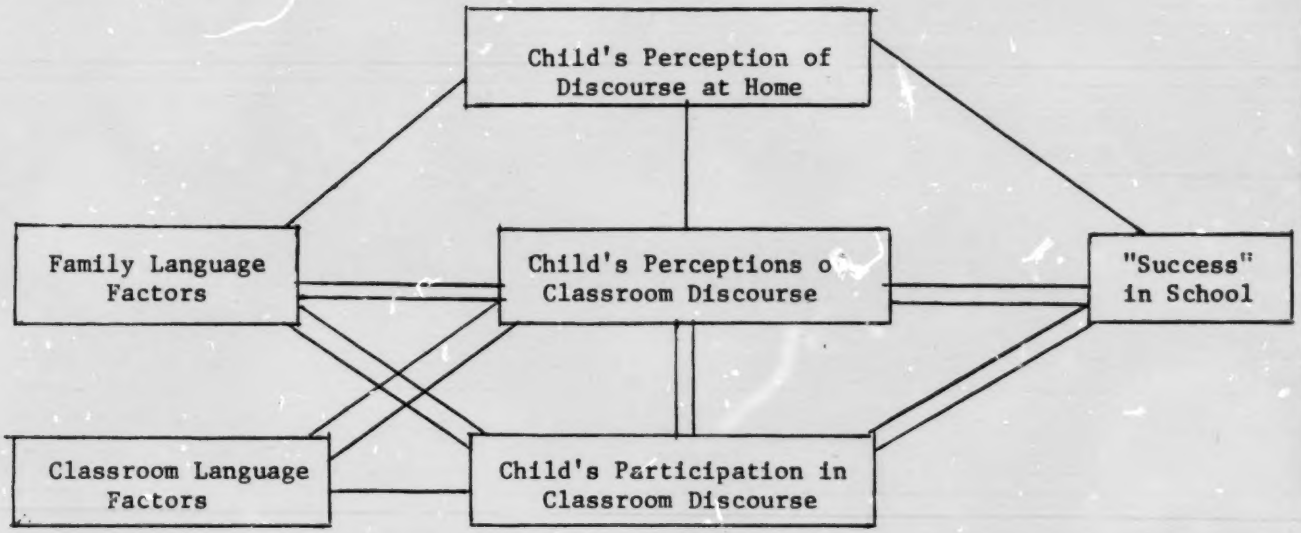
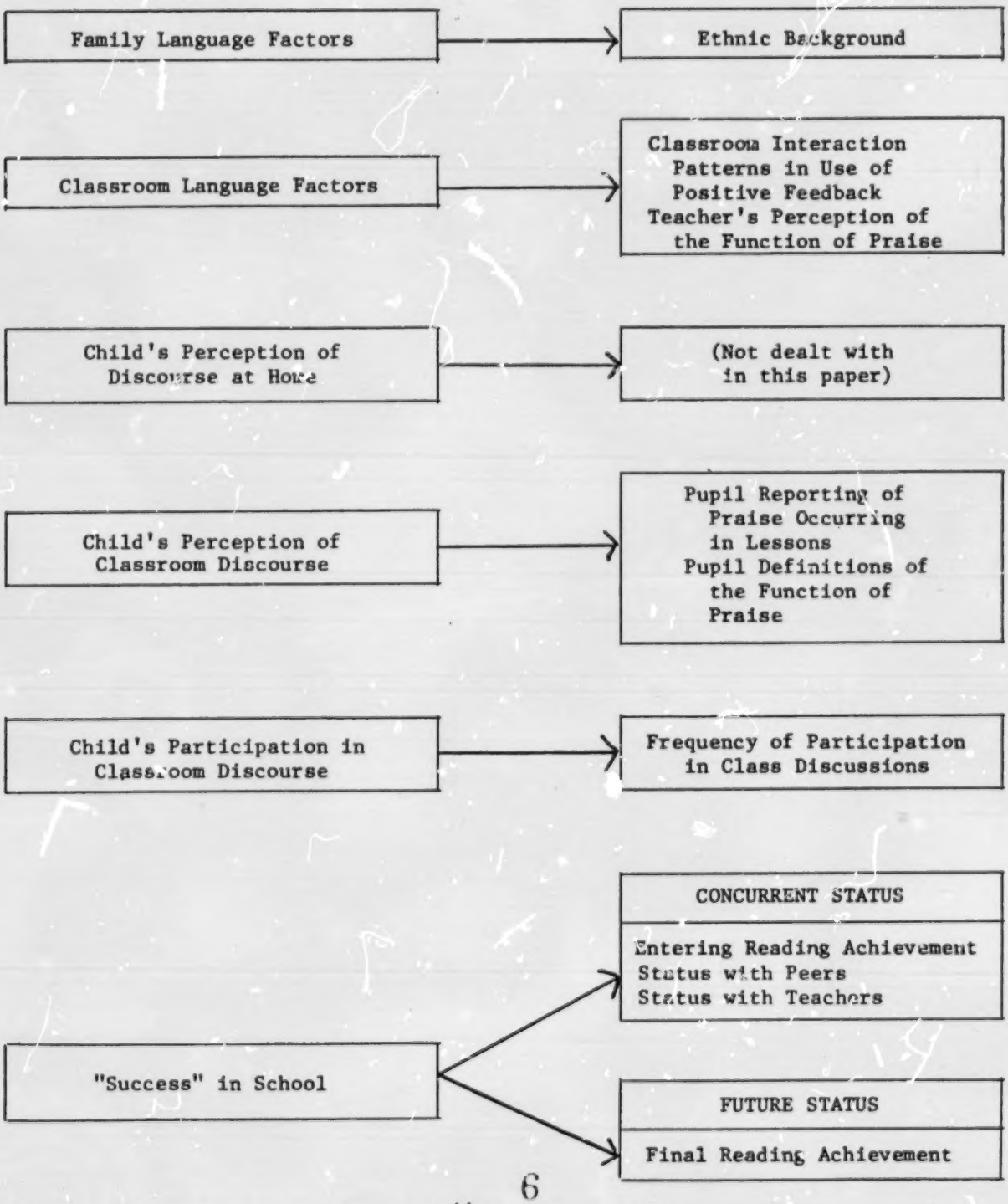

Child's Perception of Discourse at Home
Family Language Factors
Child's Perceptions o Classroom Discourse
"Success" in School
Classroom Language Factors
Child's Participation in Classroom Discourse

Figure 2

Identification of Specific Variables Considered
in Analysis of Perceptions of Praise


Family Language Factors
Ethnic Background
Classroom Language Factors
Classroom Interaction Patterns in Use of Positive Feedback
Teacher's Perception of the Function of Praise
Child's Perception of Discourse at Home
(Not dealt with in this paper)
Child's Perception of Classroom Discourse
Pupil Reporting of Praise Occurring in Lessons
Pupil Definitions of the Function of Praise
Child's Participation in Classroom Discourse
Frequency of Participation in Class Discussions
"Success" in School
CONCURRENT STATUS
Entering Reading Achievement
Status with Peers
Status with Teachers
FUTURE STATUS
Final Reading Achievement

and findings. The variables associated with "success" in school deserve some comment at this point, however.

Much of the research on effective teaching has focused on standardized achievement in basic skills as the single criterion of success in school. Furthermore, success is typically defined in terms of "future" status in achievement of basic skills rather than status during the period that the classroom is in operation. It is the end-of-the-year test that is most often used to determine the success or failure of the individual pupil and the effectiveness of the classroom teacher. Entering achievement, which might be termed "concurrent" status, is used mainly as a means of controlling for differential pupil ability to arrive at more accurate estimates of the teacher's contribution to pupil achievement.

A sociolinguistic approach to the study of classroom interaction forces us to acknowledge the importance of concurrent status, and to give equal emphasis to achievement status and status in the social system of the classroom in which the interaction occurs. We have viewed success within the social system in terms of pupil status within the peer group, as well as pupil status with the teacher. From this perspective the highly successful pupil, in terms of concurrent status, is one who achieves well in academic areas, and is highly regarded by both the peer group and the teacher. A very unsuccessful pupil is one who is low achieving, and is also low in peer status and in status with the teacher. Of the 128 pupils in our study for whom all three types of data were available, there were only 17 pupils (13 per cent) who were "very unsuccessful," and 111 pupils (87 per cent) who experienced

moderate to high status in one or more areas. Only 11 of these 111 pupils (9.9 per cent of all subjects) were "highly successful." This suggests that success in school is much more widely distributed than we might think if we consider only final academic achievement as a criterion of success. We believe that this kind of expansion of the concept of "success" in school is essential for a clearer understanding of classroom discourse.

Subjects

The subjects of this study are 164 children, and their teachers, in six second, third, and fourth grade classrooms, in a single school located at the southern end of the San Francisco Bay. The school is located in a lower socioeconomic, multiethnic, urban area, consisting mainly of small, single family dwellings. Stable, two-parent families predominate, and the school population is also remarkably stable for a lower SES community. About 45 per cent of the pupils are Mexican-American, 35 per cent are Anglo, 11 per cent Black, and 9 per cent other minority groups, including primarily children of Asian and Portuguese extraction. The six teachers are all female, and all have been teaching for many years. Four are Anglo, one is Black, and one is Portuguese.

Data Collection Procedures

The basic data collection procedure for this study involved videotaping six language arts lessons in each classroom over the first half of the school year (September through January). The videotaped lessons were played back to pupils and teachers on the same day that

they were taught. Each pupil viewed three different lessons, working individually with a data collector, and responding to a variety of data collection tasks. Each teacher viewed all six lessons, and responded to the same set of data collection tasks as did the pupils.

Each lesson was played back to pupils in three segments of about three to four minutes in length. At the end of each segment the videotape was stopped, and the pupil was asked, "What did you hear anybody saying in that part of the lesson?" The pupil's response was printed on a 3 x 5 card. As each response was recorded, the pupil was asked, "What else did you hear?" This continued until the pupil could think of no more responses. Then the next segment of the lesson was played, and the same process continued. This task was designed to provide data on what language pupils were attentive to in lessons.

Several different tasks were designed to collect information on children's perceptions of the functions of teacher praise. In the task that we will focus on in this paper, a set of praise statements that had been made by the teacher during the lesson was presented to the pupil after the videotape playback. Each statement was printed on a 3 x 5 card. The cards were placed in front of the pupil, and read aloud. The data collector said, "These are all things that I heard someone saying in the lesson. Who do you suppose said these things? Who do you think they were talking to? Why do you think they said these things? What do you suppose their reason was?" Children's responses were recorded.

Videotapes of the lessons were used to produce transcripts of each class discussion, and seating charts provided by the teacher were used to identify the pupil who made each comment, wherever possible.

These data were used to derive a measure of frequency of participation in discussion over six lessons for each pupil, and within each classroom pupils were classified as high, middle, or low in frequency of participation.

To gather information on pupil status in the peer group, each child (in January) was presented with an array of photographs of children in the class, given a series of scenarios and asked to select the three children most likely and least likely to fit each scenario. The episodes involved selection of a team for a sports contest, selection of a team for a TV quiz show, identification of the children who would be likely (or unlikely) to take charge and know what to do if there were an accident in the classroom and no adults were around, and identification of the children who would probably be observed "hanging around" with the pupil if he/she were followed for a week. Composite scores were developed for each pupil according to how frequently he/she was mentioned under "most likely" and "least likely" categories, and within each classroom pupils were classified as high, middle, or low in peer status, on the basis of these composite scores.

Data on pupil status with teachers were collected by asking teachers to group children on the basis of several different language characteristics, which had been identified in earlier studies as salient features to teachers (Morine-Dershimer, 1979; Morine & Vallance, 1975). In September, October, and December teachers were presented with a set of 3 x 5 cards, each containing the name of a pupil in their classroom, and asked to sort, or group, the pupils according to: their participation in class discussions; their attentiveness during lessons;

their tendency to follow the "no-talking" rules of the classroom; their use of "standard English;" and their probability of success in reading achievement for the year. (Some teachers in this study declined to group students on the basis of use of standard English, saying that all of the children in their classes spoke standard English, whatever that was, although in fact there was fairly wide variance in pupils' use of what many would consider correct grammar or usage.) Teachers' groupings of pupils in December, when the classroom was well established, were used to develop composite scores of their ratings of pupils, and within each classroom pupils were classified as high, middle, or low in status with the teacher on the basis of these composite scores.

Pupil "entering" reading achievement scores were based on the results of the Metropolitan Achievement Test which was routinely administered by all teachers in the school in October. Within each classroom, these scores were organized by quartiles, based on the national test norms, since the state-funded reading improvement program in the school was evaluated on the basis of the number of pupils who moved up from below the first or second quartile in reading achievement during the course of the school year.

"Final" reading achievement was measured by scores on the Metropolitan Achievement Test which was administered in the fall following our year of data collection. In examining the factors that might be related to final achievement, we have used regression analysis to control for entering reading achievement.

Data Analysis

For each task administered, pupil responses were reviewed and category systems were developed to reflect the pattern of these responses. Intercoder reliability in use of these category systems was checked by having two separate coders code all responses for one or more classes. In all cases agreement was above .90.

When all pupil responses had been coded, these data were combined with background information on pupils (ethnic group, grade level, classroom, etc.) and the SPSS computer program was used to identify general patterns of responses, as well as relationships between patterns of response and other pupil variables.

Lesson transcripts were coded to identify patterns of classroom interaction within each lesson, and pupils' reports of what they heard in each lesson were compared to the actual transcript to identify the specific statements within each lesson that drew the attention of particular pupils.

Most of the variables examined in this paper are treated as qualitative in order to make comparisons across classrooms. Chi square has been used for the most part to test the significance of relationships, and the contingency coefficient to determine the degree of relationship. Regression analyses (performed by the SAS computer program) have been used to identify the factors that contribute to status with teacher and final reading achievement.

It should be noted that this is an exploratory study, and that a large number of relationships have been examined. The reader is reminded that significant relationships which have been identified must be viewed conservatively for this reason.

Findings

General patterns of perceptions of the functions of teacher praise. The general patterns of pupil responses to the task of identifying the reasons teachers had for praise statements made in lessons are presented in Table 1. While a variety of reasons are given, the response that teachers give praise because pupils have good ideas is clearly the predominant perception.

For purposes of further analysis these initial categories of response have been combined to form four major categories of the functions of teacher praise. These are: Deserved (pupils had the right/good idea); Instructional (teacher wants pupils to learn; teacher wants pupils to feel good; teacher wants pupils to know it was the right/good idea); Routine Interactive (pupils participated; teacher wants to get pupils' attention); No Codable Function Given (other unique responses; no reason given; praise attributed to pupils).

Table 2 compares pupil perceptions of the functions of praise to teacher perceptions, using these four major categories. There are clear differences, with the predominant teacher perception being that praise serves an instructional function, while the predominant pupil

Table 1

Pupil Perceptions of the Functions of Teacher Praise
General Patterns
(N=139)

Reported Function	Number of Pupils	Per Cent Pupils
Because pupils had the right good idea	82	59.0
Teacher wants pupils to learn	10	7.2
Teacher wants pupils to feel good	11	7.9
Teacher wants pupils to know it was right/good idea	11	7.9
Because pupils participated	2	1.4
Teacher wanted to get pupils' attention	2	1.4
Other, unique responses	7	5.0
No reason given	7	5.0
Praise attributed to pupils	7	5.0

Table 2

Pupil Perceptions of the Functions of Teacher Praise
Compared to Teacher Perceptions

Reported Function	Number Pupils (N=139)	Number Teachers (N=6)
Deserved	82	1
Instructional	32	5
Routine Interactive	4	0
No Codable Function Given	21	0

perception is that praise occurs because pupils deserve it. These differences in perception may not be as incongruent as they appear at first glance, since the five teachers who report an instructional function all said that praise was used for purposes of feedback, i.e., to let pupils know they had the right/good idea. We might interpret this pattern as a demonstration that this purpose was served quite effectively, since most pupils report that the praise occurred because their ideas were right/good.

Relationships between perceptions of praise and participation in classroom discussions. There are clear relationships ($p < .025$) between pupil perceptions of the functions of teacher praise and pupil patterns of participation in classroom discussion (see Table 3). Pupils who are low in frequency of participation tend to provide no codable function for praise. Pupils who are in the middle in frequency of participation tend to define praise as serving an instructional function. Pupils who are high in frequency of participation tend to define praise as deserved, and are rarely unable to provide a codable function.

Ethnic patterns in perceptions of praise and participation in class discussions. There are no significant ethnic differences in either pupil perceptions of the functions of teacher praise, or in frequency of participation in class discussions (see Tables 4 and 5).

Table 3

Pupil Perceptions of Functions of Teacher Praise
Compared to Pupil Participation in Discussion

(N=139)

Reported Function	Low Participation	Middle Participation	High Participation
Deserved	26	23	33
Instructional or Interactive	11	16	9
No Codable Function Given	13	6	2

$x^2 = 12.58$; df=4; $p < .025$
contingency coefficient = .29

Table 4

Ethnic Patterns in Pupil Perceptions of Functions of Teacher Praise

(N=139)

	Anglo	Mexican-American	Black or Other Minority
Deserved	30	35	17
Instructional or Interactive	12	19	5
No Codable Function Given	8	6	7

Table 5

Ethnic Patterns in Pupil Participation in Class Discussions

(N=163)

	Anglo	Mexican-American	Black or Other Minority
High Participation	25	19	10
Middle Participation	17	27	10
Low Participation	15	27	13

These findings of lack of significant ethnic differences might be considered suspect, were it not for the fact that consistently throughout this study we have found no ethnic differences in perceptions of classroom discourse. We believe that this may be due in large part to our particular school population. To begin with, it is worth noting that in this school community Mexican-Americans are the majority, rather than the minority, culture. The school appears to us to be remarkably well integrated, with numerous friendship choices that cross cultural "lines." While several of the Mexican-American parents and grandparents speak only Spanish, most of the parents are bilingual, and almost all of the children we worked with were reasonably fluent in English. In fact, many told us after viewing a videotape of family conversations, where code-switching occurred frequently in the Mexican-American family, that they did not understand or speak Spanish very well. There is community interest in maintaining the Mexican-American culture in the family, but parents are also actively interested in having their children succeed in the American school culture.

This is clearly a different population of Mexican-American pupils than would be found in a bilingual classroom, and it would be unreasonable to expect that our findings would be replicated in that kind of classroom setting. We believe, however, that they do reflect the real state of affairs for this group of subjects. The evidence to support this belief is examined further in the next section.

Family language factors and success in school. One important finding in this study is the pattern of relationships between ethnicity

and success in school. There is only one instance where low status is significantly associated with minority group membership. Ethnicity and "concurrent status" are examined in Tables 6, 7, and 8, where ethnic background is compared to entering reading achievement, to peer status, and to status with teachers. As might be expected from previous studies, which have suggested that educational failure often appears to result from sociolinguistic differences between teachers and pupils (Stubbs, 1976), Table 6 shows a significant relationship ($p < .05$) between ethnicity and entering reading achievement, with Mexican-American children tending to be in the lower quartiles in reading. However, there is no significant relationship between ethnicity and peer status or status with teacher (Tables 7 and 8). Mexican-American children are no less apt to be successful in the classroom social system than are Anglos or Blacks and other minority groups.

A regression analysis using status with teacher as the dependent variable, and relative rank in class on Fall '78 reading, peer status, and ethnic background as independent variables, helps to corroborate these findings of minimal status deficit associated with ethnicity. The over-all regression is significant [$F = 5.98$ (6,118), $p < .0001$, $R^2 = .20$] and both Fall '78 relative reading achievement and peer status contribute significantly (with exact p values of .0008 and .0240 respectively) to the explained variance, but ethnic background variables do not.

The same pattern of minimal relationship between ethnic background and success in school is apparent when "future status," or final reading achievement, is examined. A second regression analysis

Table 6

Distribution of Subjects According to
Ethnic Background and Entering Reading Achievement

	Anglo	Mexican-American	Black or Other Minority
Above Second Quartile in Reading	22	15	12
Below Second Quartile in Reading	18	21	10
Below First Quartile in Reading	14	34	8

$x^2=9.75$; df=4; $p < .05$
contingency coefficient = .24

Table 7

Distribution of Subjects According to
Ethnic Background and Status with Peers

	Anglo	Mexican-American	Black or Other Minority
High Peer Status	18	16	7
Middle Peer Status	14	18	14
Low Peer Status	18	23	5

$x^2=6.63$; df=4; $p < .25$

Table 8

Distribution of Subjects According to
Ethnic Background and Status with Teacher

	Anglo	Mexican-American	Black or Other Minority
High Status	24	17	11
Middle Status	14	27	10
Low Status	17	27	10

$x^2=5.71$; df=4; $p < .25$

demonstrates this. Here Fall '79 reading achievement is the dependent variable, and Fall '78 reading achievement, information load*, peer status. ethnicity, and teacher are the independent variables. The over-all regression is significant [$F = 16.92$ (12,93), $p < .0001$, $R^2 = .667$], and Fall '78 reading achievement accounts for most of the variance, as might be expected. Teacher differences also contribute significantly to the explained variance in this equation, but ethnic differences do not. This suggests that, while Mexican-American pupils begin the year with lower reading achievement, they at least "obey" the same regression equation as do the others. They may still be at the low end of reading achievement in the next year, and in some sense this gap may be more crucial as one gets older, but at least there is not a differential downward shift.

Several items of evidence, then, suggest that when the concept of success in school is expanded to consider concurrent as well as future status, and to examine social status as well as academic status, success in school has no strong, direct relationship to ethnic background. This appears to be true for our population of subjects, at least, where ethnic differences are not compounded by differences in SES or family stability, and we propose that it is a question worth examining for other school populations as well.

Classroom differences in pupil perceptions of teacher praise. Although there are no significant ethnic differences in pupil perceptions of the functions of teacher praise, there are significant classroom differences ($p < .05$), and these data are presented in Table 9. The significance here derives largely from the tendency for pupils of Teacher C not to report praise as deserved, but to see it as

* A measure of amount of information reported by pupils as heard in videotaped lessons.

Table 9

Classroom Differences in
Pupil Perceptions of Functions of Teacher Praise

(N=110)

Reported Function	Teacher A	Teacher B	Teacher C	Teacher D	Teacher E	Teacher F
Deserved	6	16	10	18	16	16
Instructional or Interactive	2	7	14	6	3	4

$x^2 = 12.21$; df=5; $p < .05$
contingency coefficient = .31

serving an instructional function.

The reader will note that few pupils of Teacher A are represented in this table. This stems from the fact that half of the pupils in this classroom had no opportunity to respond to the task on functions of teacher praise. During the lesson with which this task was to be presented, there were no instances of teacher praise, thus we were unable to provide pupils with a set of praise statements that had occurred in the lesson.

The classroom differences that appear in Table 9 are most readily interpretable in terms of the patterns of occurrence of teacher praise, and we turn next to examine these data.

Occurrence of positive feedback in videotaped lessons. The general patterns in teacher use of positive feedback are presented in Table 10. It is interesting to note that the frequencies of occurrence descend in exact order of increase in the presumed strength of the positive feedback. This general pattern in not true for all teachers, however.

Table 11 presents classroom patterns in occurrence of positive feedback. We note first the rather low frequency of use of any type of positive feedback in the lessons of Teacher A. It is also the case, however, that the bulk of the feedback that does occur takes the form of actual praise, and that most of the praise is strong, rather than mild.

Teacher C stands out from the other teachers as using the highest proportion of repeats and the lowest proportion of actual praise. Also unlike the other teachers, Teacher C's repeats typically take the form of very slight expansions of pupil statements, rather than verbatim

Table 10

Occurrence of Positive Feedback:
General Patterns

Type of Feedback	Number of Instances Occurring in 36 lessons	Per Cent of Total Positive Feedback
Repeat Response	453	53.7
Accept Response	162	19.2
Mild Praise	135	16.0
Strong Praise	79	9.4
Extended Praise	14	1.7

Table 11

Occurrence of Positive Feedback:
Patterns in Individual Classrooms

	Teacher A	Teacher B	Teacher C	Teacher D	Teacher E	Teacher F
Total Instances Positive Feedback Over Six Lessons	62	158	146	150	164	167
Proportion Repeats	.32	.49	.69	.66	.63	.51
Proportion Accept	.21	.11	.21	.09	.16	.35
Proportion Mild	.19	.18	.05	.10	.18	.29
Proportion Strong	.26	.15	.05	.14	.02	.03
Proportion Extended	.02	.06	.00	.01	.00	.01
Proportion Praise (three types combined)	.47	.39	.10	.25	.20	.33

repeats. Her acceptance is usually an "Okay" which serves equally often as a "frame," or indication of transition to a new question. This, then, is the pattern of positive feedback in the classroom where pupil perceptions of the function of teacher praise are markedly different from pupils in other classrooms. Pupil tendencies not to define praise as deserved in this classroom may in fact be close to the mark, for the form of repeat-as-sentence-expansion can readily be interpreted as corrective feedback, rather than positive feedback. Ninety percent of the positive feedback that occurs in this class, therefore, (both repeating and accepting) is somewhat "muddy" in meaning, or open to alternative interpretations.

A third teacher who stands out as rather different in use of positive feedback is Teacher F who, unlike all the other teachers, has almost equal proportions of repeats, acceptance, and praise (.31, .35, and .33 respectively). This teacher's frequent use of mild praise ("That's interesting;" "I like that idea") occurs in the context of lessons which a sociolinguistic specialist has described as "almost conversational in style."

In addition to her somewhat distinctive use of positive feedback, Teacher F stands out as being more effective than her grade level counterpart with regard to pupil reading achievement. As we noted earlier, a regression analysis with Fall '79 reading achievement as the dependent variable, and Fall '78 reading achievement, peer status, ethnic background, and teacher all simultaneously entered into the equation, shows that teacher differences contribute significantly to the explained variance. When these teacher differences are examined more

closely, we find that there are no significant differences among the three third grade teachers in pupils' final reading achievement, when entering reading achievement is controlled. There are, however, significant differences between the two fourth grade teachers, with Teacher F's pupils tending to achieve more in reading than Teacher E's.

In contrast to Teacher F's use of positive feedback, Teacher E uses mostly repeats (.63), and is among the three "lowest" teachers in proportion of actual praise. It is worth noting that Teacher F also differs from Teacher E in use of questions (Morine-Dershimer & Fagal, 1980), so praise is not the only element of classroom interaction that serves to contrast these two teachers who differ significantly in final reading achievement of their pupils. It is also the case that, while pupils of Teacher F define the function of questions in lessons differently than pupils of Teacher E, the two classes do not differ in their perceptions of the functions of teacher praise (see Table 9). Somewhat cautiously, therefore, we suggest the possibility that Teacher E's different pattern of use of praise and positive feedback, occurring as it does within the context of a rather different conversational style of question-asking and discussion, may relate in some degree to the difference in patterns of pupil reading achievement in the two fourth grades.

Classroom discourse variables and "success" in school. We turn next to examine relationships between our two major classroom discourse variables and success in school, pausing to remind the reader that the discourse variables of pupil perceptions of the functions of teacher praise, and pupil participation in class discussions, are themselves re-

lated significantly ($p < .025$), as reported in an earlier section of this paper. Our data show that pupil perceptions of the functions of teacher praise are significantly related to each of the three measures of concurrent status.

Table 12 compares pupil perceptions of praise to entering reading achievement ($p < .01$). Pupils below the first quartile of reading achievement tend not to define praise as deserved, and frequently are able to provide no codable function. Pupils above the second quartile reverse this pattern. That is, they do define praise as deserved. Table 13 compares perceptions of teacher praise to pupil status with their peers ($p < .05$). Pupils of low peer status tend not to define praise as deserved, but report instead that it serves an instructional or interactive function. Pupils of high peer status are rarely unable to provide a codable function. In Table 14 perceptions of teacher praise are compared to pupil status with the teacher ($p < .005$). Low status pupils tend not to define praise as deserved, and often give no codable function, while high status pupils tend to reverse this pattern, frequently defining praise as deserved.

Pupil participation in class discussion is significantly related to entering reading achievement (Table 15) and status with teacher (Table 17), but not to status with peers (Table 16). The significant relationship between participation in discussions and entering reading achievement ($p. < .025$) is associated with the tendency of pupils below the first quartile to be low in participation, while pupils above the second quartile tend to be high in participation. The significant relationship between pupil participation in class discussion and pupil

Table 12

Pupil Perceptions of Functions of Teacher Praise
Compared to Entering Reading Achievement
(N=133)

Reported Functions	Below First Quartile	Below Second Quartile	Above Second Quartile
Deserved	20	26	32
Instructional or Interactive	16	10	8
No Codable Function Given	14	4	3

x^2=14.39; df=4; $p < .01$
contingency coefficient = .31

Table 13

Pupil Perceptions of Functions of Teacher Praise
Compared to Peer Status
(N=120)

Reported Functions	Low Status	Middle Status	High Status
Deserved	16	27	27
Instructional or Interactive	15	7	9
No Codable Function Given	8	9	2

x^2=11.11; df=4; $p < .05$
contingency coefficient = .29

Table 14

Pupil Perceptions of Functions of Teacher Praise
Compared to Status with Teacher
(N=137)

Reported Functions	Low Status	Middle Status	High Status
Deserved	16	27	34
Instructional or Interactive	14	14	10
No Codable Function Given	14	4	4

x^2= 16.33; df=4; $p < .005$
contingency coefficient = .33

Table 15

Pupil Participation in Class Discussions
Compared to Entering Reading Achievement
(N=154)

	Below First Quartile	Below Second Quartile	Above Second Quartile
High Participation	9	17	25
Middle Participation	21	16	12
Low Participation	25	14	15

$x^2 = 12.96$; df=4; $p < .025$
contingency coefficient = .28

Table 16

Pupil Participation in Class Discussion
Compared to Peer Status
(N=133)

	Low Status	Middle Status	High Status
High Participation	12	13	16
Middle Participation	14	17	15
Low Participation	20	16	10

Table 17

Pupil Participation in Class Discussion
Compared to Status with Teacher
(N=150)

	Low Status	Middle Status	High Status
High Participation	11	14	26
Middle Participation	19	17	12
Low Participation	23	16	12

$x^2 = 12.09$; df=4; $p < .025$
contingency coefficient = .27

status with the teacher ($p < .025$) is largely attributable to the tendency of low status pupils to rank as low participants, while high status pupils rank as high participants. The lack of significant relationship between class discussion and peer status with teacher, is rather interesting. This may be at least partically intrepretable in terms of the teacher's role in controlling participation in class discussion, by calling on pupils to take a turn.

The triangular relationship among the variables of pupil perceptions of the functions of teacher praise, pupil participation in class discussions, and pupil "success" in school is an important finding in this study, since it points to the type of relationship between status in the social setting, participation in social discourse, and interpretation of the meaning of social discourse, that sociolinguists have long posited.

Some Speculations on Pupil Reporting of Teacher Praise

Our basic data collection task, in which pupils responded to the question, "What did you hear anybody saying in that part of the lesson?" was primarily designed to gather information on the length and complexity of the language units that pupils might use in reporting classroom discourse. But as our data collection progressed, we could not help noticing several interesting trends in pupils' differential hearing (reporting) of the language of lessons. Upon investigation, several of these trends turned out to have significant relationships to the variables under study. Some have been reported elsewhere (Tenenberg, 1980) and others will be discussed in later reports. The trend of interest here was what appeared to us at first glance to be pupils' tendencies to ignore teacher praise in their reporting of classroom language.

Our initial impressions are quantified in Table 18. The total number of instances of positive feedback reported by pupils (101), in comparison to the total number that occurred (843), tends to support our impression of a rather low frequency of reporting of positive feedback (12 percent of all instances were reported). But more revealing is the highly consistent pattern that as positive feedback increases in intensity (and decreases in frequency of actual occurrence), there is a concommittant increase in the proportion of instances that are reported by pupils as heard. The same pattern holds only in part for the proportions of pupils who report instances of positive feedback. Here there is a tendency for more pupils to report the more positive types of feedback where acceptance, mild praise, and strong praise are concerned. But few pupils report extended praise, while almost half of the pupils report instances of teacher repeats of pupil comments.

In search of more understanding of this phenomenon, we have examined patterns of pupil reporting of praise and acceptance in relation to several other variables. There are no significant differences in pupil reporting of praise/acceptance by teacher, by ethnic group, or by pupil perceptions of the functions of teacher praise. When there is no systematic variation to be found, it is difficult to generate compelling interpretations of the data. Perhaps we should have dropped the matter. But the consistent patterns in the types of feedback that were reported suggested that pupils were not really ignoring teacher praise, infrequent though it was.

It occured to us that praise might be affecting pupils' reporting of classroom language in a somewhat different way. We turned to

Table 18

Pupil Reporting of Positive Feedback:
General Patterns

Type of Feedback	Number Instances Occurring	Instances Reported As Heard by One or More Pupils		Pupils Reporting One or More Instances (N=137)	
		Number of Instances	Per Cent of Instances Occurring	Number of Pupils	Per Cent of Pupils Reporting
Repeats	453	41	9.1	63	46.0
Accept	162	13	8.0	13	9.5
Mild Praise	135	23	17.0	21	15.3
Strong Praise	79	20	25.3	32	23.4
Extended Praise	14	4	28.6	9	6.6
Total	843	101	12.0		

reexamine the data, by noting the frequency of reporting the pupil comments that drew teacher praise. We compared pupil reporting of all praised comments to their reporting of the last pupil comment made before the praised comment, and to the first pupil comment made after the praised comment. Over all lessons, the mean proportion of pupils reporting the comments that were praised by teachers was .333, while the mean proportion of reporting the prior pupil comment was .211, and the mean proportion of reporting the following pupil comment was .205. This suggests to us that teacher praise may operate to make pupils more attentive to some of the things that other pupils say, and we are in the process of investigating this problem in more detail. We have found, and reported elsewhere (Tenenberg, 1980) that pupils report the comments of other pupils much more frequently than they report teacher questions.

Conclusion

To summarize, in this exploratory descriptive study of pupil perceptions of teacher praise, we have found that for our particular population:

1) Most pupils perceive teacher praise as occuring because it is deserved, i.e., because pupils have correct or good ideas;
2) This perception is fairly congruent with teacher statements that they use praise for feedback to pupils that their ideas are correct or good;
3) There are no significant ethnic differences in pupil perceptions of the functions of teacher praise, or in pupil participation in class discussions;

4) There are minimal ethnic differences in children's success in school, when the concept of success is expanded to include concurrent success in the classroom social system;

5) There are significant classroom differences in pupil perceptions of teacher praise, and these appear to correspond to classroom differences in teacher use of positive feedback;

6) There is some indication that classroom differences in final reading achievement, when entering reading achievement is controlled for, may correspond to teacher differences in use of positive feedback;

7) There are clear significant relationships among the variables of pupil perceptions of teacher praise, pupil participation in class discussions, and pupil "success" in school;

8) There is a highly consistent pattern that as positive feedback increases in intensity, it decreases in frequency of teacher use, but is reported by pupils in increasing proportions; and

9) There is some preliminary evidence suggesting that while teacher praise is not reported by pupils directly with high frequency, the pupil comments that draw teacher praise may be heard (reported) more frequently than those that do not.

While these findings are not generalizable, we believe that they are revealing of some interesting and productive directions for future research. Particularly, we hope that future research on teacher effectiveness will consider pupils' concurrent social status as well as their final achievement status in defining success in school. Further,

we hope that further investigations of classroom interaction will utilize sociolinguistic concepts of the importance of relationships among social status, participation in social discourse, and interpretations of social discourse.

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SUMMARY

Pupil Perceptions of Teacher Praise
Greta Morine-Dershimer and Gary Galluzzo

This paper reports on a sociolinguistic study of pupil interpretations of the functions of praise in lessons. Subjects were 165 pupils in six classes (second, third, and fourth grades) in a single multiethnic, lower socioeconomic status, elementary school. Data collection procedures involved videotaping six language arts lessons in each classroom. After playbacks of videotapes, pupils were asked individually, "What did you hear anyone saying in that part of the lesson?" They were also presented with a set of teacher praise statements made in the lesson, and asked why these were said. Pupils perceived teacher praise as occurring primarily because pupils had good ideas. There were significant relationships among pupil perceptions of teacher praise, pupil participation in class discussions, and pupil "success" in school ("success" was defined in terms of concurrent academic and social status). There were no significant ethnic differences in pupil perceptions of the functions of teacher praise, or in pupil participation in class discussions, and minimal ethnic differences in pupil success in school. Classroom differences in perceptions of teacher praise corresponded to observable differences in teacher use of praise. As praise increased in intensity, it decreased in frequency of teacher use, but was reported by pupils in increasing proportions.

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